



Shirley Foust

September 16, 1928 - February 9, 2025

Shirley E. (Ernst) Foust Life Story

Shirley Elizabeth (Ernst) Foust was born on 16 Sep 1928 in Portland, Oregon at the St. Vincent hospital. She was the older of two daughters born to Simon A. Ernst and Mary C. (Gilles) Ernst.

Shirley grew up in Portland and attended St. Ignatius elementary school, and St. Mary's Academy high school in downtown Portland. She was a junior princess in the 1945 St. Mary's Academy.

After graduation she began her working career with the Better Business Bureau in 1946. The company contacted the school and asked them to send their best student in typing and shorthand. They sent Shirley. Her next job was with the Crown Zellerbach Corporation as a secretary.

She met her husband, William Lee Foust, Jr., in the Spring of 1947 and they dated for 2 years before getting married on 28 May 1949. Shirley made her wedding dress as well as her "going away suit". They moved to Corvallis, Oregon where Lee was attending Oregon State University acquiring his degree in Biology and Psychology.

They spent their early years moving around living in Albany, Oregon; Columbus, Ohio; Lake Grove, Oregon; and Portland, Oregon. As their family grew they moved to Monmouth, Oregon and ended up back in Corvallis, Oregon where they stayed.

Over the years, Shirley held many other jobs as the family moved as part of her husband's education journey and job opportunities. Her work history

included working at the OSU Psychology department [1949-1951]; Gaylord Container Corp [1957-1959]; Ohio Dept. of Counseling [1959-1960]; Western Oregon College [1965-1967]; USDE Project [1973-1983]; LBCC (Linn Benton Community College) [1983-1994]. For the most part, Shirley served as an executive secretary in her employment.

They raised three children, two boys and one girl.

At the age of 55, Shirley returned to work full-time at Linn-Benton Community college as the executive secretary to the V.P. of Business Affairs. She retired in 1994 at the age of 66.

After retirement Shirley traveled with her younger sister, Jean, to Italy, France, Germany, Austria, England, Alaska, and different areas in the United States over a period of 10 years.

Shirley never wanted to be a nurse but felt like she became one when she became a caregiver for her husband, Lee, in his later years. Lee passed away on 2 Jul 2016.

Shirley was very active in her church. When the Catholic Church permitted women to be lectors, she was one of the first two women to be lectors. She was a lector for 40 years. She was also a Eucharist Minister for 40 years. She served on the Parish Council as a member and as the Chair. She was the typist and editor for the monthly newsletter for 10 years. She was a member of the Volunteer Interfaith Caregivers for 17 years. She began as a driver for people to medical appointments, shopping and errands, and then moved into the office to respond to requests for assistance.

Shirley's hobbies included gardening, refinishing antique furniture, sewing and crafting, garage sales, lunching with friends, and reading. She is an avid book reader enjoying the stories written on a variety of subjects, including westerns, biographies, autobiographies, historical fiction; by some of her favorite authors Lee Child, Mary Higgins Clark, Bernard Cornwell, Ralph Cotton, Dick & Felix Francis, Andrew Greeley, John Grisham, Robert Parker, James Patterson, Nora Roberts, and Margaret Truman. As you can see she has a wide range of interest.

Shirley lived 96 years - 6 months.

She is survived by two sons, Steven and Victor; one daughter, Narda; one grandson, Zachary (wife Amanda), and two great-grandsons, Alexander and Matthew. Along with the family there are many relatives and friends to mourn her passing.

Shirley's mass will be held at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis, Oregon (501 NW 25th), on 29 Mar 2025 at 11:00 a.m. Afterwards there will be a celebration of life in the Social Hall at the church. Inurnment will be at St. Mary's cemetery in Corvallis.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Cemetery

Corvallis, OR

Previous Events

Memorial Mass

MAR 29. 11:00 AM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
501 NW 25th St.
Corvallis, OR

Tribute Wall

“ Tid-Bit: Places lived Growing Up

When mom was born they lived above a movie theater. The owners were very skeptical about my grandparents wanting to bring in a baby to the movie. They were concerned that the baby would cry. Shirley did not cry, so the owners welcomed my grandparents bringing in Shirley to the movies. Mom does not remember the address of where this was in Portland.

They lived at 47th & Holgate SE in Portland, Oregon until Shirley was about 6 or 7 years old. She started grammar school at St. Ignatius Catholic school from there, and attended through the 8th grade. They moved across the street from their home at 47th & Holgate onto 44th & Holgate which changed the church parish boundary for them. A neighbor told them that they should be attending “Lady of Sorrows” parish and not St. Ignatius. My grandma said they were not changing schools, and they didn’t. There was a built-in buffet in the home which Shirley and her sister, Jean, converted into a play ship by adding in pieces of carpet and crawling inside. They had great imaginations. They played with a neighbor friend, Billy Fryou.

While living there, Jean got Scarlet Fever. The family was under a three-week quarantine. Since Grandpa worked he could not be in the house, so grandma and the two girls were in the house.

Grandpa would come by and talk to them through the window.

While my grandparents were renting the house on 44th & Holgate, my mom said that her parents bought the house next door. The purchase price was \$1400.00. They did not have any money for the down payment. The person wanting to sell it was a dentist. He gave my grandparents the \$100 they needed as a down payment so they could purchase the home. There were a lot of repairs to be done; the front porch, digging out ½ of the basement by hand under the house, and several other things. They lived in this house during WWII.

I don’t know where they lived from there until they moved into the home on 22nd & Glisan when mom was a senior in high school and attending St. Mary’s all girl catholic school in downtown Portland.

This is where my grandparents lived until their deaths in 1968 and 1994.

Narda Foust - April 10, 2025 at 02:55 PM

MA

Hi narda, this is Madeline i was one of your moms caregivers. I can't express how heart broken i am to find out she has passed. Yall have my condolences and prayers.

madeline - April 11, 2025 at 04:09 PM

AB

“ *Steven, Narda, and Victor:
I will always remember your mom's wonderful smile and infectious laugh. She was a gem!
Anne-Marie Barnes (Amber Fagnan)*

Anne-Marie Barnes - March 29, 2025 at 10:00 PM

CJ

“ *I remember Shirley and Lee from St Mary's when I first moved to Corvallis. Surprisingly we found out that Lee father was my father uncle. Got to to meet both of them and it felt good that I had family up here. It was just a shame we lost touch over the years. May Shirley and Lee RIP. Until we see each other again May Jesus continue to watch over your family. I will miss you both very much*



Cindy Foust Johnson - March 29, 2025 at 07:06 PM

“ *The last story-telling conversation I had with my mom was about Marriage and Children*

2024 - Interview with mom about family views of marriage and children

I got to thinking about the views and conversations between my grandparents and parents. Since my father is deceased, my mom was the only parent I could ask about her experience.

These are the questions I asked her and her answers.

1. Did you & Aunt Jean ever talk about getting married and having children growing up?

A. no

2. Did you ever talk about what you wanted your wedding to be like?

A. no

3. Did your parents ever talk about any expectation on marriage & children? A. no

4. Did your parents ever talk about wanting grandchildren?

A. They spoke about it only after we were married and said they would like to have some.

5. Was it just an expectation that you would get married & have children?

A. no

6. I know that you had to marry before Aunt Jean. Why?

A. Her mother, (my grandmother), said she wanted her older child married first. There didn't seem to be any discussion about it. My mom and dad picked a date as they had been dating for a while and that was the next step. My Aunt Jean was already engaged, but had to wait and pick a date after the date my mother chose.

7. What if you didn't want to get married or wanted to wait till later? Did you feel pressure to get married?

A. no real answer.

8. Was there the option to not get married, or to not have children?

A. no

Other comments –

My mom felt pressure to have children right away. She didn't want to. She had lived in her parent's home, and then married when she left home. She had never lived on her own. Other women friends had moved out on their own when they left their parent's home, so mom was not interested in having children immediately. She wanted to wait to have children for a time to be out of her parent's home on her own, and being married to get to know each other before having children.

First child was born about two years after marriage. Second child born three years later. After their 2nd child, mom had 4 miscarriages.

The third child was born when mom was 39 years old, and her other children were 15-1/2 and 12-1/2 years old.

I think it was smart of my mom to want to wait to have children. She wanted to know what it was like to be independent from her parents, and to get to know her husband before introducing children. Even though she went from living in her parents home to living with her husband in their home, she did live on her own for 8-1/2 years after my father passed away.

Narda Foust - March 16, 2025 at 08:36 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bit - WWII Neighbor Rules*

During WWII, Gpa was a "block warden". They lived on 44th street at the time. The windows of the houses has to be covered so no light would shine through. The top 1/2 of the headlights on the cars had to be covered so the lights would be shining downward only onto the roads.

They had ration cards for gas, cigarettes, and some food items. Since my grandmother could not eat sugar, they were able to trade some of their sugar rations for other things they did use, like coffee rations.

Narda L Foust - March 11, 2025 at 04:34 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bit - Food Preparation*

During the summers, as children, they would always pick strawberries and raspberries to earn some money. They only picked green beans for one year. They were not easy to pick. While they lived on 44th street in Portland, Oregon, they had a garden in the back of the house. The garden had a peach tree. Gma would can the peaches. Mom remembered her mother getting up in the middle of the night to check on the peaches in the oven as they processed. My mom saw how hard her mother worked at this job of canning food and said she was never going to do that, and she didn't. I never learned that skill from my mom, but did she make some good jam and jelly.

Narda L Foust - March 11, 2025 at 04:30 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bit - Neighbors helping neighbors*

Mom remembers that a neighbor down the street from where they lived would buy extra fabric material when making herself clothes. There would be enough to make mom and A. Jean some clothes. She taught gma how to sew. That skill was passed down from my grandma to my mom and then to me. I can remember when panty hose stockings became the thing to wear. Being a teenager, I would get a run in my nylon stockings and my mom would ship them to her mother to repair. Gma would repair them so they looked brand new and you could no longer see the run in them. That definitely saved on purchasing nylons all the time.

Another neighbor, Mrs. Bencich, would come to gma to practice her English. She had a boy and a girl, so when she visited they would come and play with mom and A. Jean. Neighbors were always helping their neighbors.

Narda L Foust - March 11, 2025 at 04:23 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bit - Moving to Ohio*

We lived in Columbus, Ohio for a time. Dad had a 6-week summer class at the University of Ohio. I remember we lived in old army barracks type of building. Dad was studying for his bachelors and master's degrees at Oregon State University, and his PHD at Ohio State. After they returned back to the Corvallis area, Dad continued his studying and received his doctorate in Education from Oregon State after their last child, Victor, was born.

Narda L Foust - March 11, 2025 at 04:11 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bit - Poison Oak*

Mom was highly allergic to poison oak. She would get it every year. She did not have to touch it to get it, she could get it just by it blowing in the wind. One year it was so bad that her eyes were swollen closed, and her face and neck swelled up and was weeping. You could not make out any of her facial features. Gma took rags and laid them in between the creases in her neck to keep them from sticking together and scabbing. She was lucky as she never had any scars from her bouts of poison oak.

Narda Foust - March 09, 2025 at 10:00 PM

NF

“ *Tid Bits of my mom - What you did for Entertainment*

Mom talked about going to the movies and the strategy used to get to go.

My Aunt Jean and mom would look at the newspaper for movies that had Jimmy Stewart or Edward G. Robertson as actors in them because their father liked Westerns, and Cops & Robbers.

It was a good bet that if they could find a movie that had those actors they would get a trip to the movies. You got a good bargain at the movie theatre. There were usually two movies, a cartoon, and a newsreel at each show. Gpa liked to sit in the middle of the row, but didn't like it if the girls needed to use the bathroom during the movie.

When gpa went on his hunting trips in the fall months, gma would drive them to movies taking all of the back roads, as she did not have a driver's license at that time, and the girls had to be sure never to say anything about seeing the movies while he was on his hunting trips.

Narda Foust - March 09, 2025 at 09:52 PM

NF

“ Story of my mom

Matthew 25:23 "... good and faithful servant..." fits my mom to a tee. She grew up in Catholic schools. She worked hard for those "Gold Stars" on her homework. She persevered and excelled at each of her tasks. I remember her telling me, "Whatever you do, do your best. Make it a game if you don't like it. It will go easier, and you may even come to like it." I actually found that to be true.

As soon as the church would allow females to contribute during the mass, she jumped on it. Growing up, she never thought it was fair that only boys got to be "Altar Boys".

In church, she was a Reader, and a Eucharistic Minister. She taught others how to do the job with the most reverence. She participated as part of the Eucharistic Council holding the job duties of Secretary and President.

She had a great work ethic. Leave it better than when you go it. That was applied to every part of her life.

Her strive for perfection... well, that has its caveats. Strong descriptions of her personality -- Independent, structured, attention to detail, volunteering to helping others, also brings the other side of the coin -- stubborn, rigid, unable to receive from others. It seems that our good attributes come with the other side of the coin. We cannot get away with just one side. Everything balances itself out, no matter how hard we try to only have the one side of things.

Mom,

You provided me with so many skills, attitudes, goals, that have helped me along my own path. Thank you. I know it was never easy with me, but thank you for being there when I reached out and needed you. May you rest in peace now and have continual joy.

Love you and miss you,

Narda

Narda Foust - March 09, 2025 at 09:44 PM

“ I first met Shirley when Lew, the head of the Corvallis Macintosh Users Group, gave me her name and phone number. I'm not sure of the exact date, but it was probably sometime in 2001. At the time I was the club's installer for the donations team, sent out to install one of our donated Macs and give some basic starter lessons. Shirley had an iMac and needed some basic Mac help, and Lew thought I would be a good choice to provide it.

After those first few sessions, Shirley called or emailed me several times a year for tech help with her iMac, her printer, or her internet and email. Usually it was something I could fix or explain. If not, I could get the information or tech support needed. If I hadn't heard from her in a while, I emailed her to see how she and tech were getting along.

I always enjoyed my visits and over the years they became more social—we'd deal with the tech problem and then chat for an hour or two. Shirley liked to share things that amused her. She would get this little smile and kind of duck her head, as if to palliate any unkindness in the telling. She was quite a character.

At some point along the way, we started exchanging small gifts at Christmas. Better Half and I dropped by with a loaf of my famous honey whole-wheat bread and left with a container of her famous fudge with walnuts. Shirley knew I couldn't eat the walnuts, but that was the way she made her fudge, and that was that. She was vastly amused when I told her that Better Half loved the fudge and would eat the nutty parts and leave me a few morsels of nut free stuff to savor.

Once I tried to get Shirley to upgrade from her old original iMac to a newer but still used flat screen iMac. But she wouldn't have it. She was familiar with the old Mac. She could still use it for her email and occasional forays onto the internet and wasn't interested in learning to use something different. Even when her web browser got too old to access a significant number of sites. Shirley didn't want change

just for the sake of change—an opinion I have more and more come to agree with.

I didn't hear anything from Shirley last year until June, when her daughter contacted me to let me know that her mom had had a major fall early in January and was in rehab up by Portland. Shirley wanted to go back to her home in Corvallis and her medical team had agreed to a trial period with daily in-home assistance.

In July, when I saw Shirley for the first time in over six months, the change in her physical situation was dramatic. She was not the tiny upright spry person I had expected. She was bent, and moved slowly with the support of a walker. Arthritis had severely limited her hand movements. But she was still in good spirits, still chatted about what was going on in her life. Still had that slightly impish smile.

In mid-December I learned from her daughter that Shirley had fallen again and was in the hospital, and visiting was okay. Better Half and I dropped by to find her very weak and unsure, but still feisty. We visited her every week when she transferred to a skilled nursing facility in Albany. When we stopped by Bursts for a small gift, the folks there knew Shirley well, and put together her “usual” box of chocolate covered filberts. They even offered to deliver any future gifts to Albany if we weren't going that way. I think she was kind of special to everyone who got to know her.

At the new year Shirley had improved enough to move back to Corvallis into assisted living. The last time we talked, she shared stories of her childhood and her life with Lee before moving to Corvallis. We chatted for several hours. A few days later I got word that Shirley was in hospice care.

Sometimes you don't know how much a person means to you until they are gone. Shirley isn't really gone, though. I remember our conversations, her take on events, on her life. She is my guide for growing old with attitude. And grace.

-John Otto

John Otto - March 01, 2025 at 02:15 AM